

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6327

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SUBJ: PANAMANIAN HAIL BOGOTA COMMUNIQUE AS VICTORY

SUMMARY: THE GOP HAS TREATED THE INCLUSION OF THE PANAMA ISSUE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' COMMUNIQUE IN BOGOTA AS A VICTORY INDICATING THAT THE CANAL ISSUE IS NO LONGER A STRICTLY BILATERAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE US AND PANAMA. THIS FITS WITH PANAMA'S STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE US PART OF WHICH HAS BEEN TO SEEK BROAD INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. THE IMPORTANCE PANAMA PLACES UPON SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT INDICATES THE SENSE OF WEAKNESS SHE FEELS IN DEALING WITH THE US.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER TACK, DURING AN INTERVIEW ON THE GOP-CONTROLLED RADIO LIBERTAD ON NOVEMBER 22 REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE CANAL ISSUE WAS NO LONGER A STRICTLY BILATERAL MATTER BETWEEN THE US AND PANAMA, THAT THE ISSUE HAS BECOME A LATIN AMERICAN COMMON CAUSE, AND PANAMA'S NEGOTIATORS WILL HAVE ALL OF LATIN AMERICA ON THEIR SIDE OF THE TABLE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S. FOR SEVERAL DAYS THE GOP-CONTROLLED PRESS HAS HAILED THE INCLUSION OF THE PANAMA ISSUE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN
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FOREIGN MINISTER'S AGENDA FOR THEIR TALK WITH SECRETARY

KISSINGER AS A "VICTORY" FOR FOREIGN MINISTER TACK AND PANAMA.

2. THE SUCCESS AT THE BOGOTA MEETING WAS FOR THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ANOTHER STEP IN IMPLEMENTING ITS OVERALL STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE UNITED STATES, WHICH FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAS BEEN TO GARNER BAORD INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND APPLY PRESSURE ON THE UNITED STATES. ONE TACTIC HAS BEEN TO STRESS "COLONIAL" PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE AS A SOURCE OF CONFLICT WHICH NOT ONLY ADVERSELY AFFECTS PANAMANIAN SOVEREIGNTY BUT ALSO POSES A DANGEROUS THREAT TO THE SECURITY, PEACE, AND SOCIECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEMISPHERE. THE HOLDING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING IN PANAMA WAS THE HIGH POINT OF THIS STRATEGY. THE DECLARATIONS OF SUPPORT FROM THE 80 PARTICIPANTS AT THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE AT ALGIERS AND THE FOREIGN MINISTERS' COMMUNIQUE IN BOGOTA ARE CONSIDERED BY THE GOP AS ADDITIONAL VICTORIES WHICH ADVANCE PANAMA'S CAUSE.

3. COMMENT: PANAMA'S STRATEGY IS BASED ON ITS BELIEF, OR HOPE, THAT IS CAN MODIFY THE US POSITION IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BY APPLYING INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND MORAL PRESSURE ON THE U.S. THE FACT THAT EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT, UNDERSTANDING AND SYMPATHY ARE TREATED AS "VICTORIES" REVEALS PANAMA'S UNDERLYING SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS IN DEALING WITH THE U.S. THIS SENSE OF WEAKNESS IS THE REASON WHY PANAMANIAN ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO REAL OR IMAGINED SLIGHTS AND PATERNALISTIC ATTITUDES BY AMERICANS. AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ANY SUCCESSFUL U.S. POLICY TOWARD PANAMA IN TREATY NEGOTIATIONS OR OTHER BILATERAL MATTERS IS RESPECT FOR PANAMA'S "NATIONAL DIGNITY." THE SYMBOLIC AND ATTIDUTINAL ASPECTS OF U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS ARE NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

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